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ABSTRACT

Marin City Families First (MCFF) provides advocacy and case management for 25 residents of Marin City (Marin County, California) with young children as it works to develop service and decision-making links among community agencies and networks. In this report, principles that relate to the successful delivery of comprehensive community-based child and family services are outlined, and barriers to strategies for intervention and collaboration are revealed through interviews with program directors and line workers. The focus is on barriers in the areas of: (1) collaborative case management and service integration; (2) collaborating in an ethnically diverse community; (3) collaborating with funders; and (4) collaborating with community developers. These barriers are discussed from the perspectives of those interviewed. Whenever possible insights and suggestions for improvement are made. Reflection on the barriers that impede successful service delivery can help others anticipate problems and structure ways to enhance their own local efforts in family support and community development. (SLD)

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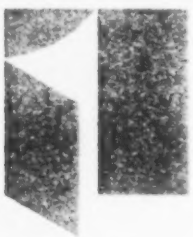

# Barriers to Implementing Common Principles of Interagency Collaboration

## Lessons Learned from the Marin City Families First Program

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# Barriers to Implementing Common Principles of Interagency Collaboration

## Lessons Learned From The Marin City Families First Program

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## Executive Summary

As this report is written, Marin City Families First (MCFF) continues to provide advocacy and case management for 25 Marin City residents with young children and develop service and decision-making links among community agencies and networks. As we proceed with this work, we follow intervention and collaboration strategies developed in previous intervention efforts as well as those recommended in the intervention and collaboration literature. In this document, we uncover barriers to those strategies.

This document is written with an eye towards what it takes to develop a successful collaboration among child and family service providers in a low-income community in the 1990's. After briefly describing four principles that relate to the successful delivery of comprehensive community-based child and family services, the document provides information about barriers to successful collaboration that have been experienced and reported to our researchers during this program year. To uncover barriers, we interviewed many agency program directors and line workers who provide services to Marin City, California residents, either through an agency based in Marin City, or through an agency in the vicinity.

While in last year's report we concentrated on issues confronting the Family Advocate caseworkers working within MCFF, this year we broadened our focus to explore issues confronting program directors of agencies working in Marin City. In particular, we focus on barriers in four areas: collaborative case management and service integration, collaborating in an ethnically diverse community, collaborating with funders, and collaborating with community developers. These barriers are discussed from the perspective of those interviewed and, whenever possible, we provide insights and make suggestions for improvement at the end of each section.

It has been our hope with MCFF to not only communicate the early intervention and linkage strategies we use and to share outcomes, but to document the development of the collaborative efforts in Marin City for use by a wider audience. Through reflection on the barriers that currently impede successful service delivery in this small community, we hope to help others anticipate such problems and structure ways to enhance their own local efforts in family support and community development.

## I. Introduction - Marin City Life

Marin City is an isolated African-American community located in mostly affluent Marin County. In a county with one of the highest average household incomes in the nation, 36 percent of households in Marin City have incomes below the poverty line. It is estimated that 34 percent of adults are unemployed and that 36 percent of adults have not completed high school. As many as 50 percent of adults may be functionally illiterate; one study indicated that about 41 percent of all residents lack the basic skills necessary for entry-level jobs. Approximately 75 percent of residents are African-American, and almost two-thirds of this group reside in public housing. Eighty-nine percent of families are headed by a single mother. Marin City has high rates of unemployment, particularly among young males; crime, much of which is drug-related; and teenage pregnancy.

The geographical layout of Marin City serves to weaken an already fragile community. In the late 1950's, the commercial center of Marin City was destroyed as part of a redevelopment project, and was never rebuilt. As a result of the same redevelopment action, a 32-acre piece of barren land now separates the public housing from the hill where the ownership portion of the community is located, in a valley called the "Bowl." Housing has consisted of government facilities and a few moderate income homes. More recently, higher priced homes have been built at the outer perimeter of the community, bringing many white residents into Marin City but with little or no contact with the rest of the community. The Bowl Area housing pattern consists of Public Family Housing, Limited Equity Cooperative Housing, and Single Family Housing. As of 1987, there were 292 contiguous low-rise and mid-rise public housing units, 98 units of cooperative housing and 86 single family homes. The average household income in the public housing units is $8,000, and the monthly rent per unit is approximately $200/month.

The plight of Marin City children and families is a critical issue. Currently, the Marin City community is overwhelmed by drug related problems; the impact of drug abuse on both pregnancy and family functioning is high. Marin City children today face circumstances that children of other times have not had to confront. Indeed, there has always been substance abuse, but the introduction of crack has taken drug dependency to an unprecedented level of danger and despair. Children must struggle with the reality surrounding them, while they are increasingly expected to fend for themselves in a fast-moving society which decreasingly values the extended family. The urgency of the situation is heightened by these families' experience of racism despite the fact that we are six years from the twenty-first century.

Services are provided to Marin City in one of three ways: 1) County agencies provide services to the entire county. This service provision includes Marin City, but Marin City is only one small part of the county agencies' overall effort; 2) Non-profit

community-based organizations serve the entire county, including Marin City, but the governance of these agencies does not tend to involve Marin City residents; and 3) Local community-based organizations within Marin City serve Marin City residents exclusively and are governed by Marin City residents.

Much of the social service support for the community comes from outside Marin City by agencies providing services based on categorical funding. Agencies in Marin City often are surprised by initiatives introduced by outside agencies that have been targeted to serve Marin City residents. Local program administrators cite this outside planning, fragmentation of services, lack of coordination and lack of direct funding of Marin City agencies as major frustrations in providing quality service to this community.

## II. Marin City Families First

For the past six years, Far West Laboratory (FWL), through its Bay Area Early Intervention Program, has worked with local communities in Oakland, San Francisco, and Marin City, California, to develop a two-pronged community intervention model. This model, Augmented Family Support Systems, is now being implemented in Marin City. Starting in January of 1993, Marin City Families First (MCFF) came into existence with joint funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, and the Stuart Foundations. The program's goal is to develop comprehensive, community-based services for low-income children and their families starting during pregnancy and continuing until program children reach age eight.

Marin City Families First is a research and development effort working with families, community agencies and schools. Four documents have been created that explain this approach: Augmented Family Support Systems: A Description of an Early Intervention Model for Family Support Services in Low-Income Communities, October 20, 1990; FAMILIES FIRST: An Early Intervention Program for Coordinated Family Support Services for Marin City Families, November 30, 1991; Comprehensive Family Service Systems: A Handbook for Planning and Practice, November 30, 1992; and A Case Management and Family Support Handbook: Lessons Learned from the Development and Implementation of Marin City Families First - An Early Intervention Program, October 30, 1993.

Twenty-five pregnant Marin City residents were recruited into MCFF in 1993 and are currently being served. A key component of the work is weekly family contact. A family advocate works with each of the families and, in collaboration with a clinical coordinator, develops appropriate in-home interventions and links families with community services and community organizations to meet their needs. Implementation of a case management/family advocate approach was discussed in the Case Management and Family Support Handbook in 1993.

The second component of the Marin City Families First approach is geared toward developing long-term changes through the formal and informal networks among service agencies that have an impact on program families. To deal with traditional family support issues and newly emerging ones, Far West Laboratory works in close cooperation with many service and educational agencies in Marin City. The intention is to integrate the education community with other social service agencies, private organizations, community groups and family members to plan and provide comprehensive services for at-risk families. Marin City agencies and other agencies in Marin have worked together to varying degrees over the years. But collaboration continues to be a difficult task in this community. It is this issue of interagency collaboration in Marin City that will be the focus of this document.

## III. Data Collection Process

Part of our process in developing programs and facilitating community collaboration in Marin City involves periodic assessment of the barriers to adequate service provision. To this end, we recently interviewed ten people who are involved in providing services to Marin City. We talked with representatives from six community-based agencies, four of which are non-profit organizations located in Marin City that serve Marin City residents exclusively and two of which are non-profit organizations that offer services to the entire county. The agencies provide a variety of services such as treatment for substance abuse, institutional child care, medical care and case management for low-income pregnant women, and family support to low-income families. Our interview group consisted of four program directors, one clinical director, four line workers and one evaluator.

Based on initial conversations with people intimate with the Marin City service community, we designed a semi-structured interview to explore identified barriers to interagency collaboration in Marin City. Each participant was interviewed individually in his or her home agency for one to two hours. Agency representatives were asked open-ended questions about such issues as building collaborative relationships, differences in organizational practices among agencies, decision-making processes, quality of community leadership, adequacy of program funding levels and culturally appropriate practices. From these discussions, we developed the following report. The report summarizes much of what these agency workers had to say about their experience in planning and delivering services to Marin City. When possible, we provide our own commentary to emphasize particular points or add an additional perspective to the issue being presented.

By discussing the experience of line workers and agency directors working in Marin City, we hope to use their insights to highlight possible impediments to program implementation and collaboration that may apply to other communities. Although we focus on Marin City in particular, we believe that many of the problems we discuss that interfere with interagency collaboration will be relevant to other communities involved in similar efforts. It is our hope that this information can be used by others to identify weaknesses in their collaborative efforts and develop plans to prevent the occurrence of some of the same problems in their own communities.

## IV. Marin City Families First Operating Principles

For the past twenty years, Far West Laboratory has been involved in helping local communities plan and develop social and educational programs to better serve young children. Based on a previous literature review and our early intervention experience, we developed a set of operating principles for community intervention to improve the lives of children and families. The Operating Principles are as follows:

1. **Relationship-Focused Intervention:**

   ***The focus of intervention should be the development of supportive relationships and networks.***

2. **Community Mental Health:**

   ***A redefinition of acceptable interpersonal behavior and community esteem needs to be developed.***

3. **Socially and Physically Safe Sanctuaries:**

   ***In order for parents and families to make long term gains they need to have safe havens in which they can heal and grow.***

4. **Two Pronged Intervention Plan:**

   ***Both families and community agencies need to be the focus of the intervention.***

5. **Individual Plans:**

   ***Each family must participate in developing their own programmatic goals.***

6. **Program Facilitation:**

   ***Effective early intervention cannot be done in isolation.***

7. **Quality Child Care:**

   ***Child care must be made available to families in need.***

8. **Culturally Grounded Experiences:**

***The program should develop from and be part of the community culture.***

9. **Responsive Facilitation Process:**

***Change must come about with and through the efforts of the families being served and grow from community needs and effort.***

All of the principles we list have been particularly useful in past community intervention efforts. However, through our experience working in Marin City and through interviews with people working in this community, we have identified overriding issues surrounding Marin City service delivery that impede the successful implementation of the MCFF program and our community facilitation efforts. In light of these issues, we decided to describe how four of these operating principles can become de-railed when put into practice in this particular context. We will focus specifically on those principles that speak most directly to collaboration among service agencies; namely, principals that emphasize development of relationship-focused interventions, culturally grounded experiences, socially and physically safe sanctuaries and a responsive facilitation process.

## V. Collaborative Case Management and Service Integration

**Principle #1**

**Relationship-Focused Intervention:**

> ***The focus of intervention should be the development of supportive relationships and networks.***

To be truly effective, community interventions must be planned so they can become part of an orchestrated and ongoing social support system that is part of the daily fabric of community life. Effective interventions should emphasize connection. It is through connection that isolated families and overwhelmed service providers and agencies can change their plight. Marin City Families First models and supports the development of hulping relationships and community connections. This is done by facilitating the development of personal links among family members, MCFF staff and families, families and other community members, families and social service agencies, and among service agencies at the staff and program level.

The first prong of our intervention, The Augmented Family Advocacy System, is designed to deal directly with program families using a case management system to identify and meet individual child and family needs. Case managers develop plans to improve parent/child relations as well as improve family relationships with the various informal neighborhood and community networks and service agencies who can provide services to meet their needs.

Throughout this process however, we have heard from program directors and line workers of the many ways in which supportive networks and relationships have proven difficult to develop and maintain. Challenges to the collaborative case management process in particular are issues such as:

- Impediments to conducting successful case review meetings
- Non-professional client-staff relations
- Agency turf issues in reducing duplication of services
- Slow process of change for low-income families

Young children and their families are dramatically affected by conditions and events that take place not only within the home but also within the broader contexts in which family life is embedded. Individual change must be accompanied by contextual change if the changes are to be more than temporary. This means that if an intervention approach focuses on only the home or on only the larger context in which the home is situated, the intervention will be incomplete.

Therefore, the second prong of the Marin City Families First intervention, the Community Services Support System, deals directly with those informal networks and service agencies. It is designed to develop long-term changes in the quality of life in those communities served. Informal neighborhood and community networks are identified, enlisted, and facilitated in their support of program families. The Community Services Support System focuses on upgrading and expanding services as well as establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships among informal networks and service agencies.

As MCFF became involved in collaborative efforts among agencies that extended beyond collaborative case management, we witnessed some of the impediments to developing supportive relationships among agencies for the purpose of service integration, such as:

- Threats to program identity in collaborative linkages
- Lack of community involvement in decision-making
- Local agency exclusion from service delivery planning
- County and local agency isolation from one another

All of these difficulties contribute to an atmosphere in which agencies face an arduous task of crossing over boundaries to work together effectively. Thus, as MCFF began trying to help build relationships among agencies serving Marin City, we recognized these barriers to collaboration as complex, historically embedded and extremely difficult to overcome. We briefly discuss these barriers to collaboration from the perspective of those providing services to Marin City and we offer suggestions for improvement, when feasible.

**Greater Emphasis on the Value of Case Review Meetings May be Needed**

One important way in which agencies can collaborate with one another to create change for families is through case review meetings. Case workers and program directors of relevant agencies from around Marin City meet together around individual family cases to develop a plan for more comprehensive, coordinated service delivery. According to several of those interviewed however, it is always difficult to coordinate schedules among agency workers to meet about particular cases. Many argue that what is needed is a common block of time across all the county agencies and relevant Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to work on collaborative case management.

Although case reviews are now a more frequent occurrence in Marin City, the lives of the case workers' clients are in such crisis that problems are always surfacing which make it seem impossible for the case manager to make her regularly scheduled case review meetings. The tension is ultimately between prevention and crisis modes of working in a crisis-driven environment. Line workers find it difficult to abandon a family

in crisis while they try to work on longer-term, preventive solutions to another family's problems.

Nevertheless, if a truly comprehensive approach is to be effective, we feel that case managers will have to balance their attention to immediate, acute family crises with developing long-term strategies for their clients. It is incumbent upon program directors to send the message to their case workers that the case management meetings are of critical importance to their overall scope of work.

Planning and coordination of this effort are also important. One program director complained of receiving five different phone calls from people of one collaborative group asking her to come to the next case review meeting. Too often, agency workers reported that case review meetings are planned at the last minute and are too long or too vague in their approach to be of real value. If agency workers do not view the meetings as useful for improving the lives of their clients, they are not likely to attend regularly, reducing further the opportunities for collaboration.

**Professional Distance Between Case Managers and Clients May Improve Client Progress**

Professionals from Marin City who go back to the community to work after their education become powerful gatekeepers to the clients that they serve. Because they are a part of this community, their biases play out in both positive and negative ways. Although staff from Marin City have credibility within this community and a keen understanding of the problems that plague Marin City, they can also participate in keeping residents from creating real change for themselves. Their own familiarity with the clients can predispose them to maintain biases about their clients' ability to make progress.

Historically, agencies in Marin City have tried to hire community residents to provide services to Marin City families because they felt the knowledge of the community was critical for appropriate service delivery. However, some staff report that it rarely makes sense for agency directors to hire only community residents to provide services to a small community like Marin City. Line workers from the area may not be able to work as effectively with these families because of their own biases and inability to maintain confidentiality in such a small community; "If everyone knows a family and has made judgements about them, it can be very difficult for the family to rise above that in their daily lives." One program director has seen four or five drug abusers who went through treatment outside of Marin City tell her they were afraid to go back to Marin City afterwards because of the biases among the professionals who knew them as well as among their peers. They felt they would be trapped back into the same roles again.

Non-professional familiarity between staff and clients is perhaps peculiar to geographically isolated Marin City, but it may apply to relationships in rural communities as well. It seems to us that case managers with some distance from such tightly-knit communities can provide some opportunities and confidentiality that local residents probably can not. Even though it can take six months to a year for residents to trust case managers from outside their community, we have seen that they can become accepted.

**Reducing Duplication of Services is a Difficult Process**

Streamlined coordination at the line worker level usually requires a reduction in the duplication of services to clients. When line workers began to work collaboratively in Marin City, they found that many of them were providing similar services to the same clients. For example, MCFF case managers and Marin Maternity Services case managers provide similar services to pregnant women, although MCFF is able to continue case management for the family after a child is born, while Marin Maternity Services is not funded to do this.

To deal with this problem, one program director suggested putting all the line workers' tasks on the table and reorganizing them according to different people's focus, skills, and levels of expertise. However, many interviewed explained that changing people's professional duties can be extremely difficult because agencies are so territorial about their roles in the community. Turf issues have never been resolved in Marin City, according to several program directors, and this threatens to undermine community networking because agencies feel particularly vulnerable to loss of program funding. For example, administrative staff of three different child care centers housed in the same building refuse to acknowledge that their services are similar to the others in the building. They argue that their services differ in their philosophy of care, the ages of the children served, and the economic status of the children's parents.

Because program directors appear to be so concerned about survival, they may tend to believe that it is in their best interest to show how their programs are different from one another in order to demonstrate community need for their particular program. Otherwise, they may face budget cuts or program closings in the future in the name of streamlining services. Although one can argue that a closer collaboration among these programs could result in marked improvement of their services and viability, changes in program direction, philosophy, and management tends to be seen as a threat to directors of small, independent programs.

**The Slow Process of Creating Change With Families Must be Acknowledged**

Collaborative efforts at the line worker level, if successful, are reflected in positive

changes for the families involved. No matter how efficiently a collaboration is run however, if it does not result in positive change for families, it is not successful. All too often, our idea of success for families can take a very long time to materialize, if in fact it ever does. To illustrate this concept, let's look at one example.

One MCFF client, Susan, had been involved with three different drug rehabilitation organizations in the Bay Area, repeatedly trying to end her addiction to drugs. As her case manager, the MCFF family advocate worked with over half-a-dozen agencies to coordinate services for her to support her in this process. When Susan was finishing her rehabilitation program in Oakland, she asked to be reunited with her infant son, who had been taken away from her by Child Protective Services (CPS) because she was abusing drugs.

The CPS worker was pessimistic about Susan's likelihood for success and was not particularly supportive of her, according to the MCFF case worker. Line workers in county agencies, who usually have extremely heavy caseloads, can be judgmental toward their clients and therefore provide little advocacy and support. So, for example, they may not help clients make contacts needed to access services, or help them make appointments, if only because of lack of time. Since members of the case management team knew this, they worked together to fill in the gaps that they knew the CPS worker could or would not fill. Members of these various organizations worked together as a team to find a safe place for her and her son to live and developed a plan that they thought would be acceptable to CPS which would provide the level of support that Susan needed.

The team then invited the CPS worker to a meeting to discuss the plan. The CPS worker, who some felt had been ineffective in many such cases in Marin City, was impressed with their plan and was willing to accept it. Not only had the team developed a good service plan, but they had not alienated the CPS worker in the process. This is a real tribute to the coordinative efforts of the team and illustrates the potential importance of building personal relationships among staff; working together in this way can build trust over time. CPS staff have historically had negative images of Marin City agencies, but by making contacts with CPS workers, Marin City agency workers have begun to forge relationships that will hopefully change those images for the better.

Unfortunately, Susan began using drugs again and was forced to leave the rehabilitation program. As a consequence, she has not yet reunited with her son, but she still keeps in contact with the MCFF advocate. She says that she knows what she is doing with her life is not working and knows MCFF will be there when she is ready to try again.

Although this particular case has not been deemed "successful" yet, the groundwork among the different agencies has been laid so that when the client is ready for the

support she needs, it will be possible to provide a network of services for her in a comprehensive manner. That the client is maintaining a relationship with the MCFF advocate can be seen as an important step toward success, but it remains to be seen whether or not the collaborative effort results in the anticipated level of success that the agency workers hope for her. Positive change for families often takes a long time to emerge and to be recognized as such.

**Maintaining Program Identity is Often Important for Collaborative Linkages to be Successful**

Historically, Operation Give A Damn (OGAD), the Marin City agency that housed the Marin City Families First program, has had a great deal of trouble maintaining funding levels for its programs. This was reportedly demoralizing for both the program board and staff. Joining in a partnership with Far West Laboratory to form MCFF was useful to OGAD in a number of ways. FWL brought to the collaboration its research experience and its credibility with funders. OGAD needed this type of support in order to sustain itself financially. With this alliance, services could be expanded in the Marin City community and more families could be reached. Additional funding that flowed from the collaboration allowed for a new sense of stability and higher morale because full-time family support staff could be hired. In turn, OGAD brought to FWL its credibility within Marin City, which allowed FWL to enter the community more easily and do constructive work there.

But the collaboration also proved difficult for OGAD in some ways, particularly with regard to boundaries among the staff of the different OGAD projects. Once MCFF really began in earnest, and a prior OGAD employee began working as a MCFF Family Advocate, the OGAD director seemed concerned that the Family Advocate now perceived herself as separate from OGAD. Program staff reported that MCFF was receiving more of the attention than the other OGAD projects; projects which had created the groundwork in the community over many years and in which staff had invested a great deal of time and energy. Because the MCFF program was open to working through problems, these issues were eventually resolved through discussions with the program director and staff.

Another agency working with Marin City clients also found stability through the establishment of collaborative linkages but not without some initial difficulties. Pregnancy to Parenthood was a small agency that, for seven years, provided case management to teen mothers. A few years ago, they began considering other agencies with whom they could merge to become a stronger entity in the community. Once they negotiated a collaborative relationship with another agency, staff report that they had to deal with more programmatic headaches, but they also gained advantages, such as an administrative staff and larger offices. More importantly, the services provided by Pregnancy to Parenthood are still available to the community

while the services of other agencies have disappeared as some agencies eventually closed their doors from lack of sufficient support. One key aspect of this relationship is that Pregnancy to Parenthood did not simply meld with another agency. They have a specialty within the agency which helps them to retain their own identity. Staff believe that maintaining this distinction was important for establishing a successful collaborative relationship with another agency.

**Community Representatives Need to be Involved in Decision-Making That Involves Their Community**

Members of the non-profit community in Marin know one another and attend many of the same meetings together. But Marin City program directors are reportedly often outside the information loop, so they become excluded from making certain decisions that affect their community. For example, one organization initially brought people together from various agencies to create a collaborative project but, according to one program director, once the funding for the collaborative effort began, communication problems became evident. There appeared to be an "old boys network" in which decision-making occurred in the style of the organization's old culture. Decisions about the project appeared to be made informally outside of the collaborative meetings among a smaller group of participants central to the organization. When this issue was raised during one of the collaborative meetings, members of the organization did not acknowledge such practices. The organization's denial created even more distance among members of the collaboration because appropriate means of decision-making were never sufficiently addressed.

According to many interviewed, community representatives who feel alienated from the decision-making process confront a dilemma. The dilemma is deciding whether to become active decision-makers despite the fact that some decisions have already been made prior to their participation or wait to participate when they are involved in the process from the very beginning. If community representatives complain about being excluded and then are invited into the process at a later point in time, they often feel torn between accepting the invitation and remaining uninvolved as a form of protest. Yet, if they remain uninvolved, services to Marin City will continue to be delivered without input from the community. Many harbor great anger at this inattention to community representation, regardless of how unintentional it may appear to be. Trust seems hard to build under such circumstances.

Many in Marin City have chosen to participate in collaborative efforts, even when the invitation seems perfunctory or overdue, in order to ward off further alienation. To participate however, they may decide to become involved in the process only if they can talk about their perspective of what went wrong with the collaborative process prior to their invitation. This confrontation can make other collaborators uncomfortable, but we believe it can be a legitimate attempt to keep lines of communication open so

that the anger is addressed constructively rather than allowing it to sabotage future efforts.

**Local Agencies Need to be Included in Planning Service Delivery to Their Community**

Funders often identify populations with particular characteristics who need to be served by the programs that they fund. However, program directors interviewed reported that agencies outside of Marin City often do not bring in representation from within Marin City when developing proposals for funding that will ultimately be used to provide services to the people in this community. They claim that it is very unusual for outside agencies to include Marin City agencies in collaborative planning for service delivery. Historically, most outside providers tend to tell Marin City agency directors what plans they are going to implement in the community and, at best, ask them if they want to be a part of it.

Because Marin City agency directors so often complain of being excluded from planning and decision-making by the larger community, many are now insisting that they be involved with outside agencies during proposal development or they will not be involved later. Their feeling is that if outside providers do not work with Marin City agencies to determine the best way to provide services and potentially involve the Marin City agencies in that service delivery, outsiders should not be providing services in the community at all.

One example of this exclusion comes from a fairly recent collaborative effort. Some agencies in Marin County came together to develop a planning grant to serve Marin City and the "Canal" area; another low-income community in Marin County which is home to a large Hispanic population. However, the agencies did not seek representation from these areas when developing their proposal for the planning grant. Once they received the planning grant, they invited agency representatives from within these areas to discuss the design of the program, but by then, people from Marin City and the Canal felt alienated from the process.

According to many interviewed, outside providers tend to assume that Marin City residents will want their services, regardless of what those services are or how they are delivered. When developing proposals for funding, agencies outside of Marin City cite the high poverty and drug abuse in this community, only to become frustrated in their attempts to provide outreach to the community once they are funded because their recruitment efforts to provide services to these residents systematically fail. Recruiting clients for services often fails, according to agency workers, because outside agencies do not know how to reach the community effectively, are providing services not wanted by the community, or are providing services in a way that discourages participation.

For example, one county agency arranged to have their staff provide medical assistance to Marin City residents for sexually transmitted diseases. The agency executives decided to deliver this service from a mobile van that would visit the community on a regular basis. Because residents in Marin City knew what services the van staff provided, very few were willing to take advantage of their services. They feared the stigma from others in the community if they were seen. Many directors of programs in Marin City argue that if the county programs talked with people in the community about how best to provide such services, they might be able to reach more people effectively.

We have learned a great deal from examples such as these. They illustrate the need for service providers to take the time necessary to assess community needs and develop a plan with community representatives to ensure that services are provided appropriately. Far West Laboratory tried to adopt this policy by spending six months talking with agencies in Marin City about what community needs should be addressed through MCFF and how best to deliver services to Marin City families. Developing a plan for service delivery required a great deal of time to coordinate with participating agencies. Once the program plan was established, FWL continued to develop relationships within the community by working through an existing Marin City agency which already had credibility in the community and involving people in the MCFF program who had previously worked in Marin City.

It is clear that agencies should try to work through existing organizations in the communities in which they plan to provide services in order to provide adequate services to families there. Without working through existing community liaisons, it is likely that recruitment efforts will fail to draw the numbers of people expected and many residents will complain of inadequate service provision.

**County Agencies and Local Agencies Need to Overcome Isolation From One Another**

Some believe that, because Marin City programs were funded well in the past, the sense of program self-sufficiency that arose from this funding hindered collaboration between Marin City community-based organizations and outside agencies. Prior to the 1990's, Marin City agencies provided many direct services to residents of their community, so that if the county agencies in Marin did not provide many services to Marin City, community residents did not feel particularly deprived. But as funding of Marin City programs diminished, Marin City residents began receiving significantly fewer services over the years. Marin City agency staff were angry with the funding cutbacks that reduced their services to the community and frustrated with the quantity and quality of services being provided by outside agencies. Many program directors now agree that if Marin City agencies are not funded to provide needed services in the community, they must reach out to the larger community to ensure that services are delivered to Marin City and delivered in appropriate ways.

Because county agency staff tend not to reach out to Marin City agency staff to plan service provision, Marin City staff have found that they have to make themselves known to the larger community; "People have to know you exist in order to invite you in." As one practitioner claims, "You need to make people see that their fears are unfounded by dealing with them at a personal level." One approach is for Marin City agency staff to make contacts with other agencies in a pro-active way. For example, MCFF case managers took the initiative to present some details of the MCFF project to CPS staff and offered their assistance. Their relationship with CPS has been improving ever since.

As county agencies become more comfortable with people from Marin City agencies, it is hoped that they will be more comfortable taking the initiative to include Marin City agencies in the future. But in addition, it seems apparent that Marin City needs to have agency workers and politically active residents able to work both within and outside of Marin City in order to promote greater inclusion in decision-making. It is not likely that community representatives can remain isolated from the rest of the county and still be invited onto county-wide boards and councils. A pro-active approach on the part of Marin City may not only improve communication between agencies in the short-run but may also help to reduce fear of the unknown agency or staff, which can promote greater collaborative opportunities in the future.

## VI. Collaborating in an Ethnically Diverse Community

**Principle #8**

**Culturally Grounded Experiences:**

***The program should develop from and be part of the community culture.***

Programs that develop from and represent the community cultures of the people they serve are in a much better position to develop practices that can improve the lives of the people in the community. Service providers need to put into practice policies which support the community they serve and acknowledge the value of culturally diverse identities, beliefs and practices. The following nine recommendations for cultural sensitivity are listed below. Although these recommendations, when written, were geared toward child care practices, they have been modified slightly to apply more broadly to the practices of any service program or collaborative effort designed to meet the needs of children and families.

1. ***Provide Cultural Consistency***

   Services should be in harmony with what goes on at home, following the form and style of what is familiar to the child and the family.

2. ***Work Toward Representative Staffing***

   Employ staff who are of the same culture and who speak the same language as the children and families served. Include culturally representative staff in decision-making positions.

3. ***Use the Home Language***

   When possible, program staff should speak the language of the children and families served. Written materials should be translated into the home language. If necessary, have a translator available to assist communication.

4. ***Make Environments Relevant***

   The environment in child care centers, family resource centers and other service centers should reflect the culture of the children and the families served. It is especially important that when very young children are in services outside the home they are made to feel at home by bringing

symbols (family photos,etc.) of the home with them.

5. ***Uncover Your Cultural Beliefs***

   All people belong to a culture or cultures and see the world through their own cultural "lenses." One's own values and beliefs influence the type of service one provides. Staff should participate in a supervised process that helps them to uncover their cultural beliefs.

6. ***Be Open To the Perspectives of Others***

   Staff should be trained in an awareness of multiple perspectives relating to child rearing and family functioning. There is not only one "right" way to do things.

7. ***Seek Out Cultural and Family Information***

   Staff should learn about the families and their daily practices through reading, asking questions, visiting the community and if willing, discussion.

8. ***Clarify Values***

   Staff should talk with clients about things that they are unsure about or that cause disagreements and make themselves available for conversations with family members about their concerns and values.

9. ***Negotiate Cultural Conflicts***

   When there are differences, be open to the family's point of view. Be willing to change some of the program practices based on family feedback.

When program staff do not follow recommendations such as those listed above, what often surfaces are strong barriers to building relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds, culminating in cultural conflicts that are difficult to resolve. Such conflicts usually stem from racist beliefs and assumptions that reflect a lack of understanding about and empathy for people of different cultures.

Often however, racism is very difficult to identify unequivocally - it is something that is expressed not just through blatant verbal innuendo, but pervades through tones of voice, body language, decision-making processes and institutional practices. When discussing racism through the lens of client-agency worker interactions, the picture

becomes distorted because the interaction is only one small piece of the total context; we rarely, if ever, have the opportunity to see the larger picture of racism. According to one case worker, "The way racism works, if a White agency worker is confronted with his or her racist attitude, the response often is, 'But I only said....'." In other words, they claim that they did not mean anything by the language that they used. The language can sound seemingly innocuous, but can be delivered very differently, and in any event, is only one small piece of the larger context. Because clients often react to racist treatment with hostile behavior, they are more likely to be seen as the problem, rather than the agency worker who ignores them or fails to help them in a meaningful way.

From our interviews with practitioners, it is clear that racism affects not just clients of color but operates at every level of community service delivery; it affects the families of color dealing with agency workers, the caseworkers of color working within the system, as well as the program and executive directors of color involved in community collaboration and decision-making. What follows are challenges discussed by program directors and line workers to creating positive change within a culturally diverse community. We discuss problems between line workers and clients that arise from:

- Racist attitudes and actions by staff
- Staff inexperience with clients of different cultures
- Lack of cultural sensitivity training of staff

In addition, we outline problems of institutional racism, such as:

- Insufficient cultural representation of staff
- Insufficient cultural representation on community boards and councils

Part of any successful collaboration seems to be about finding people who are open to working together in new ways and sharing leadership. It does seem however, that in low-income communities where collaboration may be needed most, it is precisely those places where people tend to be disempowered and therefore have a long history of resentment to work through in order to work well together. When racism is a part of the equation, collaboration appears to be all the more difficult to accomplish. Continued reluctance to confront racist beliefs and practices perpetuates anger among people of color in and around Marin City and may result in reduced collaborative service delivery to this community.

**Program Administrators Need to Address Racist Attitudes and Actions by Line Workers**

Relationships between clients and agency workers are often less than ideal in many instances, regardless of race; some line staff may have little respect for the clients

who come through their doors. However many interviewed report that White line staff are often less tolerant of clients of color because of their racist attitudes about them. For example, one MCFF case worker reported hearing line workers say, "Oh, is it that wetback Mexican girl - is she pregnant again?" She claims that people of color often do not get the best service because the workers are often scared of them and at the same time, do not take their situation seriously. The workers may think that families of color are accustomed to violence and poverty and so, creating change in these clients' lives is not really needed or expected. Thus, according to this case worker, clients may not have the same quality of life presented as a possibility for them as for White clients.

One line worker relayed an incident which reflects a more subtle expression of racism that tends to work against building trust among clients and staff. In this case, staff at a school found what appeared to be bruises on an African-American little girl and they concluded that she had been hit by her mother. They called CPS staff and the mother's case worker, who also agreed the marks were bruises. They took the child to CPS to begin processing temporary placement for the little girl outside her home. When the mother was called, she insisted that the marks were birthmarks. This was eventually confirmed by a physician and the child was returned to her mother.

This scenario was a minor incident for staff who deal with potential child abuse cases on a daily basis, and one which was resolved fairly quickly. The actions taken by the staff were considered a mistake, but one which was deemed "acceptable" because so many of the marks found on children these days ARE a result of child abuse that line workers can not afford to let doubt sway them for fear of overlooking the real cases of abuse. But the deterioration of trust between the client and case worker from such an incident can be irreparable for the family struggling with one crisis after another. Months later, the mother reportedly still has not forgiven her case worker for not believing her. The relationship between the case worker and the mother should be setting a foundation for the family to build upon but instead, it may take months for the relationship to be restored after this mistake.

Without someone representing a position of authority to speak on their behalf, clients of color often have little or no recourse with which to address the neglectful practices that can accompany racist beliefs of line staff. Racism can result in reduced quality of services to people of color that can influence the quality of their lives and thus, should be addressed by program administrators in a productive way.

**Case Workers May Require More Experience With People of Different Cultures to be Most Effective**

One line worker reported that an African-American client, who is handicapped, has a case manager who had never worked in an Black neighborhood before. Several of

those interviewed question whether it is fair to expect a case worker to assess a client's situation and progress appropriately and provide the most appropriate services if the case worker has such a vastly different range of experiences and background. Some case workers report that it is hard to measure client success under such circumstances; either staff have such low expectations for their client's success that they do not provide sufficient support and options to the client, or they do not recognize incremental changes in client behavior or their situation as evidence of progress.

Line workers report that White service providers working in Marin City genuinely want to help those in need, but they may not always have the experience and understanding necessary to develop positive relationships with clients of another culture, especially when the client is in crisis. Many staff reportedly do not know how to handle volatile situations with clients of color except to ignore the clients or push them out of their programs.

Some of those interviewed provided the following recommendations for White staff working in communities of color: 1) service providers must acknowledge their fears of people of color when this exists; 2) they must acknowledge their own racism rather than denying it or finding excuses for their behavior; and 3) they must take responsibility for educating themselves about racism. Programs can help this process along by raising consciousness informally as well as by providing competent cultural sensitivity training on a regular basis.

**Cultural Sensitivity is an Important Aspect of Staff Development**

Several of those interviewed claimed that White service providers for Marin City can become very defensive if it is suggested that practices in their program are racist or that they themselves may be racist. Many White staff reportedly believe that their programs need no additional help to provide culturally appropriate care for people from cultures different than their own.
However, this belief often contrasts with clients' and other agencies' perceptions, according to those interviewed. One line worker feels that when a Marin City African-American client expresses anger in a program, he is more likely be kicked out of the program if it is run by people of another culture, particularly in residential treatment programs where clients involved in substance abuse or domestic violence live together.

Although we do not have the data to verify such impressions, we believe that potentially racist assumptions and practices should be questioned and addressed through regular cultural sensitivity training. However, the need for cultural sensitivity training is apparently a controversial issue among some White staff in Marin service agencies. One program director says that she has to constantly do battle with her

staff over the need for cultural awareness in her program. She reminds White staff that they may not be in the best position to provide culturally competent services to clients of color, especially without sufficient training. To show that White staff can not assume to know what life is like for a person of color, she relays stories to them from professional African-American people in the community, such as not being able to cash a check or having change put on the counter rather than in their hands at the store. She points out that White Americans are simply not as likely to experience such situations as African-Americans.

Such stories can be used, not as a way of separating people from one another, but as a way of illuminating the extent to which racism pervades every aspect of their lives. Hopefully, despite some possible staff resistance, high quality cultural sensitivity education will help staff become more understanding of the unfair pressures under which people of color continue to live and will alter their beliefs and practices accordingly.

**Service Agencies Often Need Greater Cultural Representation on Their Staff**

Most of the staff and administrators of the programs serving Marin City are White. When the director of one prominent collaborative effort in Marin was hired, one of her first actions was to hire staff of color; it may be the collaborative with the largest number of staff of color in the county. Before this, however, the program reportedly had not recruited representation from communities of color at all and people in these communities were angry about the exclusion. Therefore, it took a great deal of effort to convince the community of their good intentions and repair the damage afterward.

One administrator notes that when agency directors want to provide more appropriate cultural representation on their staff, they often do not know where to place an ad or what to say in the ad to attract people of color, such as, "The position requires someone personally intimate with the community..." She found herself coaching another program director recently about how to word an ad to reach the African-American community because the law will not allow employers to specifically request a person of color.

Administrators report the difficulty of finding staff who represent the communities of people their programs serve. To aid their search, program directors should work closely with those communities to identify qualified job candiates. We believe that balanced cultural representation at all levels of program operation is critical for changing racist assumptions and practices. Culturally representative staff can not only increase staff understanding about clients, but clients are likely to benefit from seeing people of their own culture working successfully at all levels of the economy.

**Collaborative Groups Need Greater Representation on Boards and Councils From Communities of Color**

Many program administrators indicate that there are virtually no people of color on any executive or legislative councils in Marin County. Many interviewed suggest that since people of color have little upward mobility in Marin, they do not have access to many of these positions and the White community often does not know how to recruit them.

Another issue regarding cultural representation is the function of that representation. Practitioners report that if a White person sits on a collaborative board, for example, s/he is seen as representing his or her agency. But if an African-American person sits on a board, he or she is often seen as not only representing an agency but the whole African-American community. Often, one or two people of color in a community will become the designated representatives for the entire community of color. Not surprisingly, those called upon often become overextended, and their attendance on these boards and councils may not be consistent. The person identified as the cultural representative for the committee is then seen as someone who is not committed to the process and the search for other representatives of color may stop altogether.

It appears that this process operates as a form of institutional racism. It reflects a lack of understanding of the diversity within communities of color and a lack of attention to broadening representation of people of color on important committees. To break down institutional racism, agencies, councils and boards must expand and intensify their search for cultural representation and educate themselves on the best ways to attract people of color who can meet their needs.

## VII. Collaborating With Funders

**Principle # 3**

**Socially and Physically Safe Sanctuaries:**

> ***In order for parents and families to make long term gains they need to have safe havens in which they can heal and grow.***

If we wish to prepare children and families to act in more caring and less violent ways in the fearful realities they now face, we must provide them with sanctuaries to explore new ways of behaving. Everyone needs a secure place to rest and repair. David Hamburg, the President of Carnegie Corporation, has made the point that, particularly for very young children, this safe haven is necessary. Without, as he calls it, a chance for a prolonged immaturity (protected early years spent with caring adults), children are forced to develop premature rules for the attainment of their safety, security, and survival. When developed early these rules are almost always rigid, limiting, and based on fear.

Unfortunately, many families living in Marin City are "in crisis" to such an extent that these safe havens are severely jeopardized. According to one case worker, a tremendous amount of work is required just to help her clients begin to have dreams about a better life, and even then, their dreams are extremely limited. The best many hope for is to get Section 8 housing or find a way to leave Marin City. Case workers report having difficulty working on preventive strategies like teaching living skills or budgeting, which help families prevent crises in the future, because their families are so often in immediate crisis situations. Of one MCFF family advocate's 13 families, she considers only two families as "not in crisis."

MCFF works with community members to establish therapeutic nurseries, family resource centers, and high quality child care settings in which trusting relationships can be established so that families and children can have a safe and secure place to grow. What we have realized, however, is that not only are the families in crisis but the agencies which house the case workers are also in crisis. Therefore, a major issue with respect to creating safe havens for children and families in Marin City is addressing the inadequate funding of programs and agencies to provide needed services.

An array of services is needed in any community to meet the needs of low-income families in a comprehensive way. In Marin City, the under-funding of existing agencies creates an especially difficult environment for creating change because the families served by the agencies are so often in crisis; a vicious cycle of working through crises is never-ending for both the families and the agencies. Until a family can be provided

with enough comprehensive services to break this cycle, the crises will continue. But breaking the cycle also requires sufficient program funding to stabilize the agencies providing the services to these families.

We have identified four key issues concerning funding in Marin City that interfere with effective collaboration for providing quality services to families, in particular:

- Inadequate support of programs during transition periods
- Under-funding of programs
- Fragmentation of services
- Single-funder support of programs

What follows is a discussion of some of the ways in which agency funding problems continue to impede collaboration in Marin City.

**Basic Family and Program Needs Must be Met During Critical Transition Periods**

A foundation in Marin County that funds many Marin City programs has been the focus of much anger from Marin City agencies. One foundation agenda, according to Marin City agency staff, is to centralize service delivery in order to reduce duplication of services. Toward this end, the foundation reportedly reduced agency funding to Marin City this year from about $ 1,000,000 to about $600,000.

Marin City agency directors originally believed the foundation would approve a planning grant for one year, during which time, the agencies could determine how they could best work together to reduce duplication of services. However, the agency directors claim that only program proposals were funded, not planning proposals. If agencies spent their resources on a program with no prior planning, they believed they would fail. Their fear was that this failure would then be used to justify pulling all existing program funds in the future. Thus, Marin City agency directors were frustrated by a transition process which they felt was designed to create failure.

Since agency directors funded by the foundation felt that the foundation did not develop a transition plan for agencies to work in new ways with one another, they felt that collaboration was being forced upon them prematurely. Agency directors complained that the foundation did not recognize the time required to develop trusting relationships in a community and that trying to force collaboration would not allow the collaborative process to evolve in a meaningful way.

Because of the dramatic decrease in funding this year, many agency directors in Marin City felt forced to close their doors or reduce their services to the community. Without a transition plan to help agencies find new ways to work with one another, directors indicated they were left with a choice of either limping along through the year or

stopping services altogether. Because agencies have relied heavily on the foundation for their support, they found themselves with nowhere else to turn for additional funding in this current crisis. According to one case worker interviewed, reduced funding decreased the number and quality of services to families in the community and resulted in an erosion of trust that families had in the agencies' stability. Without stability, she claimed, neither families nor agencies are likely to create positive change for themselves.

Some agency directors argued however that agencies have known for years that this centralization effort was imminent. They claimed that although the foundation may not have provided an easy transition for agencies, agencies should have developed new ways to work with one another a long time ago, in order to offset potential disruption in services.

In either event, such frustrations highlight the need for funders to clearly state pending changes for agencies in advance and help develop a transition plan with them whenever possible. This form of assistance might ease the transition for agencies and their clients and thus sustain service delivery through difficult economic times rather than halt many needed services altogether.

**Agencies Need Adequate Funding to be Effective**

One example of the impact of funding reductions is with Marin Services for Women, which provides intensive treatment for female substance abusers. Because of funding cuts at this particular agency, a staff member with whom the MCFF family advocates had a primary relationship left the program. This meant that MCFF staff had to find time to make new connections with the agency's staff; time these caseworkers claimed they did not have. In addition, funding was also reduced for a transitional program with which Marin Services for Women collaborated. When clients are going through drug abuse recovery, line workers claim that it is important to have a transitional program after their intensive in-patient treatment to ease them back into independence. But because of the reduction in funding, this program had to reduce its slots to only four women at a time and only for one year. Thus, the program's availability is so limited that the chances of providing this transition to a recovering client are minimal. Case workers argue that the lack of a transitional program decreases a client's chances of a successful recovery.

Marin Maternity Services, which runs a clinic for low-income pregnant women, is another example of a good program that does not have sufficient funding to do its job as effectively as it might. Staff caseloads are so large that clients often wait long periods of time in order to see a caseworker. This diminished service to individual clients jeopardizes the amount of progress that could be made if sufficient guidance and support were available, according to case workers. Other agency workers also

find it difficult to arrange meetings with the staff there because of their busy schedules, which reduces the level of coordination possible with this agency.

The impact of funding cuts, whether from the foundation in Marin County or elsewhere, is that Marin City agencies are cutting back on their services, increasing their caseloads per worker, or shutting their doors altogether. Some interviewed acknowledge the possibility that a few agencies were no longer providing quality services. However, a dramatic reduction of needed services can create large gaps in service delivery, which then affect the daily lives of individual families. Some believe that the gaps in service delivery to Marin City have become too wide to cover with existing services and that families are suffering as a consequence.

**Programs Must Stop Fragmenting Their Services to Meet Funding Criteria**

In retrospect, some interviewed think the funding cuts of Marin City agencies this year may have been useful in the long run. They believe that some of the agencies lost their vision or had been around too long and lost their energy. "When an agency is funded year after year, staff can become too comfortable." In addition, some in the community believe that when agencies have been around together for too long, the resulting competition between them can be destructive.

Although these comments are speculative, community members must think carefully about whether or not the community needs all the services they currently have. At a Marin City service providers' meeting recently, a speaker emphasized that agencies need to be service driven rather than funding driven; administrators need to develop a long-term, tailored approach to service delivery. He claimed that this approach will result in more financial support to agencies in the long run because they will be focused on providing a needed service well rather than fragmenting their vision by continually adapting their program to meet criteria set by new funding sources. With this strategy, agencies can then seek out funders who fund programs more closely aligned to their vision.

**Programs Must Diversify Their Funding Sources to Build Stability**

According to some interviewed, a few directors of Marin City agencies unfortunately ignored the fact that foundation money only tends to last for about five years. Some believe that these directors may have become complacent about expanding their funding sources and that is why they are particularly vulnerable now. "People would rather complain about their loss of funding, and the resulting loss of security, than make the time to solicit new funding. Writing proposals is hard work."

Others are so frustrated with their funding situation that they have come to believe that

the foundation which provides the major funding for their programs may be discouraging other funders from supporting Marin City programs. When some program directors have approached other funders to diversify their agency's funding base, some funders imply that Marin-based agencies should not need additional resources in such a wealthy county, while others are told that they are already funding other agencies to provide services to their community and therefore they do not want to spend any more on Marin City.

Speculation by Marin City agency staff that this local foundation is orchestrating an effort to hinder their efforts clearly reflects a breakdown in communication between the agencies and the foundation; a breakdown which is likely to be detrimental to their relationship. It will be important for Marin City agencies and the foundation to improve communication with one another so that trust can be restored.

In addition, we believe that it is absolutely necessary for non-profit agencies to procure funding from multiple sources. For example, MCFF is fortunate because they have more than one source of financial support; this gives them more freedom to negotiate with their funders. When agencies do not receive funding from several sources, they are necessarily vulnerable to shifts in funding priorities by their sole source of support. The relationship between the foundation and the Marin City agencies might be considerably more balanced if the agencies had some financial leverage with which to negotiate change.

## VIII. Collaborating With Community Developers

**Principle # 9**

**Responsive Facilitation Process:**

> ***Change must come about with and through the efforts of the families being served and grow from community needs and effort.***

Over the years a philosophy of community assistance has been delineated which we have come to call the Responsive Facilitation Process. This style of facilitation has been used to implement community interventions throughout the country. There are two goals of the Responsive Facilitation Process. The first goal is to help service providers to accurately understand the needs of families. The second goal is to assist and enable these different providers to develop program plans based on the new "family vision;" plans that address not only short term needs of families, but plans that involve alteration, orchestration, and continuity of currently provided services.

Three basic tenets of the Far West Laboratory facilitation philosophy are:

1. ***Local norms, names, customs, and traditions should not only be respected but capitalized on to make the program meaningful for the community. The role of the facilitator using the Responsive model is to customize, adapt, and link intervention strategies.***

2. ***Local programs, community actions groups, and other key actors should be enlisted in support of the program from its inception.***

3. ***Decision-makers are those who make decisions and act on them. They are found at all levels of the community system. Therefore, it is important to enlist participation of all members in a community - administrators, teachers, parents, and other key community members.***

Ten specific principles guide FWL facilitation efforts with local communities.

1. ***Introduce new ideas***

   The facilitator provides information from other communities and programs that have been successful in providing services to families and children or show promise in doing so.

2. ***Assist with the development of priorities***

   The facilitator helps the community define priorities and participates in the periodic assessment and reshaping of priorities.

3. ***Provide options***

   The facilitator offers suggestions from which the community members (educators, other service providers, and parents) may choose.

4. ***Provide training and technical assistance***

   The facilitators provide technical assistance support that is requested by the community.

5. ***Stimulate dialogue***

   The facilitator creates a non-threatening environment that allows for dialogue among the various actors on site.

6. ***Be Flexible***

   The facilitator takes a flexible approach to change while maintaining a consistent facilitation philosophy and being sensitive to the strengths and characteristics of the local community.

7. ***Keep low visibility***

   The facilitator shares ownership for ideas and encourages key groups to assume leadership in creating the program.

8. ***Provide insights about the big picture***

   The facilitator should be able to take a stance outside the day-to-day activities for the purpose of analyzing the community's efforts to attain long range goals and helping the community identify potential barriers.

9. ***Give moral support***

   The facilitator affirms community members' efforts so they can carry out their work with the confidence that they are moving in the right direction.

10. ***Share research and evaluation findings and strategies from similar efforts***

The facilitator identifies models and strategies that will assist the community in its documentation of program implementation and program outcomes.

Community development efforts can be an important vehicle for creating significant change in communities and can serve to encourage collaboration among service agencies. In our discussions with agency directors and staff however, they have indicated problems with the ways in which community development is currently taking place in Marin City, in particular:

- Inadequate technical assistance to programs
- Lack of community's voice in decision-making
- Lack of a powerful advocacy group for Marin City

Below, we discuss these three major issues in greater detail.

**Technical Assistance Should be Tailored to Meet Program Needs**

The foundation in Marin County that supports many of the Marin City agencies is trying to build capacity in Marin City by providing them with technical assistance support, however, some program directors do not view their efforts as effective. Funding has been allocated for program directors to meet together to discuss collaboration, but some program directors complain that the consultants who are brought in to facilitate the discussion and present their own ideas provide no follow-up beyond the initial meeting. They feel this is a waste of valuable opportunities. Many agency staff suggest the importance of having on-going technical assistance rather than one-shot seminars and to have them based on what programs see as their critical needs.

In addition, many agency directors feel their programs are being "micro-managed" by the foundation. Some interviewed believe that the foundation only wants the agencies to be successful and so they are very concerned about how the agencies should be run. Others, however, feel that their scrutiny is inappropriate.

What is clear is that agencies need to be involved in determining what kind of technical assistance they need. The ideal approach, according to one program director, is in the form of a true partnership. Funders would aid programs in getting additional funding by connecting them to other resources. Funders would spend time with programs so that they could critique the program and make constructive suggestions for improvement. They would also provide information about other

programs similar to theirs to give programs ideas about new directions and strategies for operation.

**Communities Need a Legitimate Voice in Determining Their Needs**

The foundation in Marin suggested that agencies hold community meetings to determine community needs before submitting their proposals for this year's funding. Although the foundation supports the idea of community forums and needs assessments, Marin City agency directors believe that the foundation's focus on economic development overrides the community voice. For example, when the agencies developed proposals designed to meet the needs expressed during the community meetings, program directors felt the foundation had them revise their proposals repeatedly in order to suit the foundation's agenda - collaboration around the central issue of economic development. Program directors argue that in order for job readiness programs to work as the foundation intended, other issues, like substance abuse and self-esteem, must be addressed first. The foundation was accused of having little commitment to social needs peripheral to economic development.

Communities certainly need a voice in determining what needs should be addressed. It seems that in this case, the foundation, Marin City residents, and agencies need to work together to agree on an approach that allows for both social and economic service delivery to occur simultaneously. Such a compromise will most likely take some time to reach.

**Communities Can Profit From a Powerful Advocacy Group to Voice Community Needs and Desires**

Marin City residents and local agency staff repeatedly underlined the need for a legitimate forum to voice their concerns in order to gain more control over the services provided to the community and the ways in which those services are delivered. Some believe that one of the reasons why the difficult relationship between community developers and Marin City agencies has been allowed to continue is that the agencies are only service agencies, not advocates for Marin City residents. There is no powerful governing body in Marin City and therefore no real advocate for the town.

One approach which may provide Marin City agencies and residents with a stronger voice is the recent development of a coalition of people of color from the greater Marin area. As long as the coalition only included Marin City voices, this group could be ignored. But with a larger group with broader connections who can rally together on particular issues, Marin City agencies and residents may have a chance to effect some political change in the future. For some members of the community, this

coalition signifies a ray of hope for bringing the community together around important issues and many hope they will have the clout necessary to bring about needed changes in Marin City in the near future.

## IX. Conclusion

Using Marin City as one example of a collaborative effort, we have shown how the principles that we believe are necessary for successful service delivery to children and families can be undermined by extenuating circumstances in the community. By discussing interagency collaboration in context, we anticipate that readers involved in similar efforts will be able to identify more clearly with the issues we have raised in this report. We hope that our reflection on the insights of program managers and line staff working within Marin City will encourage others involved in collaborative efforts to reassess their own progress and develop useful strategies for improving interagency collaboration in their own communities. Through periodic reassessment of the progress they are making within their communities, we believe that collaborators are more likely to anticipate potential barriers to service delivery in the future and thus increase their chances of effecting positive change for children and families in their communities.